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Software Developer, Cybersecurity Analyst.

Towards a Single Integrated Internal Market for a Federation of African States south of the Sahara

Empirical Foundations, Economic Coherence, and Systemic Rationality

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About The Author

Djibril Chimère Diaw

Software Developer, Cybersecurity Analyst.

Dedication

To

my mother Marème Fall

my father Amadou Chimère Diaw

my wife Isabelle Diaw

my children

Fatou-Chimère Diaw, Ahmadou-Chimère Diaw,

Marième-Chimère Diaw, Aïssata-Chimère Diaw .

my grandparents

Fatou Methiour Ndiaye & Waly Sega Fall

Fatou Faye & Souleymane Chimère Diaw

Teachers

To those who shall come into the world a century after me, beginning in the year two thousand and seventy-two.

To all mothers,
to those who made our coming into the world possible through the gift of themselves,
to those who, even today, carry, give birth to, nourish, protect, and raise life,
to those who, tomorrow, will continue to open the path of human existence.

To all women who, in silence or in light, have risked their bodies, their strength, and sometimes their lives so that humanity may endure.
To their quiet courage, their daily resilience, and their founding love.

May this work stand as an act of recognition,
a tribute passed on from generation to generation,
and a word of gratitude addressed to those without whom nothing would have been, nothing is, and nothing will be.

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ENGLISH

Editorial Preface

The question of Africa’s economic future can no longer be addressed within the narrow confines of fragmented national markets. In Africa south of the Sahara, the persistence of structural divisions—legal, monetary, regulatory, logistical and infrastructural—continues to constrain growth, weaken productive capacities and limit the continent’s ability to convert its demographic vitality and abundant resources into sustainable prosperity. Against this backdrop, the proposal for a **single, integrated internal market within a Federation of African States south of the Sahara** emerges not as a theoretical abstraction, but as a strategic imperative.

This editorial preface sets the intellectual and political framework for a collective plea in favour of such a market. At its core lies a simple yet powerful conviction: economic integration is the indispensable foundation of genuine sovereignty. Without a sufficiently large, coherent and regulated internal market, Africa south of the Sahara economies remain exposed to external shocks, confined to low value-added activities and locked into asymmetric relationships within the global economy. Conversely, an integrated federal market would create the conditions for economies of scale, regional industrialisation, technological diffusion and the emergence of competitive African enterprises capable of operating beyond national borders.

The vision of a unified internal market within a federal structure goes beyond trade liberalisation. It implies the free and secure circulation of goods, services, capital and people; the harmonisation of standards and regulations; the coordination of macroeconomic and industrial policies; and the construction of shared infrastructures—physical, digital and institutional. Such a market would not only stimulate intra-African trade, but also foster social cohesion, territorial balance and a sense of shared economic destiny among the peoples of the region.

This preface therefore invites policymakers, scholars, economic actors and citizens to reconsider the scale at which development strategies are conceived and implemented. It argues that the challenges facing Africa south of the Sahara—industrial transformation, employment for a rapidly growing population, food and energy security, and strategic autonomy—can only be met through a federal approach grounded in a unified internal market. The pages that follow develop this argument in detail, examining both the potential benefits and the demanding conditions required for its realisation.

Ultimately, the plea advanced here is one of responsibility and foresight. Building a single integrated market for a **Federation of African States south of the Sahara** is not merely an economic reform; it is a civilisational choice. It reflects the ambition to move from a collection of juxtaposed economies to a coherent economic space capable of shaping its own future, contributing to global stability, and offering its citizens the tangible promise of shared prosperity.

General Introduction

The structural fragmentation of markets in African States south of the Sahara constitutes one of the principal obstacles to the continent's economic transformation. Despite dynamic demographics, rapid urbanization, and considerable potential in human and natural resources, Africa south of the Sahara economies remain largely characterized by narrow markets, segmented by tariff and non-tariff barriers, regulatory divergences, insufficiently interconnected infrastructures, and weak integration of regional value chains. This situation limits economies of scale, discourages productive investment, weakens international competitiveness, and perpetuates excessive dependence on the export of primary products with low value added.

In this context, the advocacy for the establishment of an integrated and single internal market within a **Federation of African States south of the Sahara** is grounded in an economic, political, and strategic perspective. It is not merely a matter of harmonizing trade rules or facilitating the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people, but of creating a coherent federal economic space capable of supporting endogenous industrialization, accelerating innovation, strengthening resilience to external shocks, and offering populations a framework conducive to shared prosperity.

Comparative experience from major regional economic unions demonstrates that internal market integration constitutes a fundamental lever for sustainable growth, social cohesion, and economic sovereignty. For Africa south of the Sahara, an integrated federal internal market would represent a paradigm shift: the transition from juxtaposed and competing economies to a continental economy organized around productive complementarities, institutional solidarities, and a shared vision of development. This reflection therefore aims to analyze the foundations, challenges, and conditions for the feasibility of such a single internal market, envisaged as a central pillar of a Federation of African States south of the Sahara capable of addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Towards a Single Integrated Internal Market for a Federation of African States south of the Sahara

Empirical Foundations, Economic Coherence, and Systemic Rationality

Abstract

The fragmentation of national markets constitutes one of the major structural obstacles to economic development in Africa south of the Sahara. Despite sustained demographic growth and a historically significant aggregated economic mass, the region remains characterized by weak internal integration, the proliferation of non-tariff barriers, and institutional segmentation inherited from the colonial era. This article advances an academic case for the construction of a **single integrated internal market** within the framework of a **Federation of African States south of the Sahara**. Drawing on the analysis of economies of scale, the theory of integrated markets, comparative experiences, and aggregated macroeconomic data, it demonstrates that internal market integration is not an ideological preference but a systemic necessity to transform the region's demographic and economic mass into sustainable productive power.

Keywords: economic integration, internal market, African federation, economies of scale, economic sovereignty, Africa south of the Sahara.

1. Introduction

The internal market constitutes the functional core of any modern economy. It determines the capacity of a political space to organize the circulation of goods, services, capital, and labor, to sustain endogenous production, and to structure a large-scale solvent demand. In contemporary economic history, no durable power has been built without an integrated, extensive, and institutionally coherent internal market.

In Africa south of the Sahara, dominant analysis still privileges narrow national frameworks, even though the region represents a demographic and economic aggregate of continental magnitude. This analytical contradiction leads to an underestimation of the continent's real potential and to the naturalization of weaknesses that in reality stem from institutional and structural choices.

This article argues that the construction of a **single integrated internal market**, anchored in a **Federation of African States south of the Sahara**, constitutes a necessary—though not sufficient—condition for the emergence of a systemic, autonomous, and sustainable development trajectory.

2. Market Fragmentation and Structural Inefficiency

2.1 Institutional Legacy and Economic Segmentation

Africa south of the Sahara economies are the product of an exogenous political partition that has generated a multitude of small, weakly connected markets. This fragmentation manifests itself through:

- heterogeneous customs regimes;
- non-harmonized technical and regulatory standards;
- multiple currencies and high exchange costs;
- infrastructure designed for extraction and export rather than regional integration.

The result is a structural paradox: a demographically massive region, yet economically fragmented, unable to generate an integrated internal demand commensurate with its potential.

2.2 The Macroeconomic Cost of Fragmentation

Market segmentation leads to chronic underutilization of productive capacities, weak industrialization, and excessive dependence on external markets. Firms operate within narrow markets, which limits:

- economies of scale;
- long-term productive investment;
- innovation and industrial upgrading.

Thus, the weakness of the African internal market is not demographic or cultural in nature, but institutional.

3. Theoretical Foundations of an Integrated Internal Market

3.1 Economies of Scale and Market Integration

Economic theory shows that market enlargement enables:

- reductions in unit production costs;
- increases in productivity;
- sectoral diversification;
- consolidation of internal value chains.

Within a federal space, internal market integration makes it possible to overcome the critical size constraints that penalize isolated national economies.

3.2 Internal Demand and Economic Sovereignty

An integrated internal market transforms the population into a collective economic actor. Aggregated demand becomes an endogenous engine of growth, reducing vulnerability to external shocks and commodity cycles. Economic sovereignty is thus built less through autarky than through internal coherence.

4. The Systemic Potential of Africa south of the Sahara

4.1 Demographic Mass and Market Potential

With a population expected to exceed two billion by 2050, Africa south of the Sahara possesses the demographic foundation necessary to constitute one of the world's largest internal markets. However, this potential remains largely theoretical as long as internal economic borders function as effective barriers.

4.2 Aggregated GDP and Productive Coherence

Historical data show that the region's aggregated GDP has, in the past, reached levels comparable to or even exceeding those of major Asian economies. The absence of an integrated internal market largely explains why this economic mass has failed to generate lasting structural effects in terms of industrialization and innovation.

5. The Internal Market as a Pillar of the Federation

5.1 Functional Superiority of the Federal Framework

An integrated internal market presupposes:

- a common regulatory authority;
- the effective free movement of factors of production;
- a coordinated competition and investment policy;
- infrastructure conceived at a continental scale.

These conditions exceed the capacities of traditional intergovernmental agreements and require a federal framework endowed with genuine economic competences.

5.2 Complementarity with Other Federal Pillars

The integrated internal market cannot be dissociated from:

- a common or coordinated currency;
- a federal industrial policy;
- economic defense against predatory external practices.

It constitutes the backbone around which the other dimensions of federal sovereignty are articulated.

6. Obstacles and Conditions for Implementation

6.1 Political and Institutional Obstacles

Resistance to integration stems less from economic constraints than from:

- fears of formal sovereignty loss;
- the persistence of national rents;
- weak administrative capacities.

6.2 Conditions for Success

The success of an integrated internal market requires:

- progressive legal convergence;
- a credible and sequenced timetable;
- mechanisms of compensation and interregional solidarity;
- democratic legitimation of the federal project.

7. Analytical and Strategic Implications

Internal market integration compels a rethinking of Africa's economic analysis, no longer as a juxtaposition of fragile national economies, but as a potential large-scale system. It also reshapes the region's position in the global economy by strengthening its bargaining power, resilience, and capacity to define its own development trajectories.

8. Conclusion

This article argues that the construction of a **single integrated internal market** is not one option among others, but a structural condition for the success of a **Federation of African States south of the Sahara**. Economic history shows that productive power emerges from the coherence of economic spaces rather than from the mere accumulation of factors.

By transforming a substantial demographic mass into a unified market, the Federation would enable Africa south of the Sahara to move beyond economic juxtaposition and enter the stage of systemic structuring. The true challenge, therefore, is not Africa’s size, but its capacity to conceive of itself, organize itself, and act as an integrated economic space.

Cross-Cutting Conclusion

The construction of an integrated and single internal market within a **Federation of African States south of the Sahara** emerges, at the conclusion of this analysis, not as an ideological option, but as a historical and strategic necessity. In the face of asymmetric globalization, the reconfiguration of international value chains, and the intensification of economic and geopolitical rivalries, the fragmentation of African national markets constitutes a major structural vulnerability. Conversely, the progressive unification of economic spaces offers the possibility of transforming this vulnerability into a collective strength.

An integrated federal internal market would make it possible to stimulate internal demand, secure outlets for local producers, promote regional industrialization, and strengthen the Federation's negotiating capacity on the international stage. It would also create the institutional conditions for regulatory, fiscal, and social convergence, which are indispensable for more inclusive growth and for reducing territorial inequalities. However, such a project cannot be limited to statements of principle: it requires firm political will, an assumed transfer of competences to the federal level, mechanisms of inter-state solidarity, and massive investment in material and immaterial infrastructures.

Ultimately, the integrated single internal market is not an end in itself, but a structuring instrument in the service of a broader federal project: that of a Africa south of the Sahara capable of mastering its economic destiny, fully valuing its human capital, and positioning itself in the world as a pole of stability, innovation, and shared prosperity. The success of such an undertaking will depend on the capacity of states and peoples to transcend fragmented notions of sovereignty in order to build, together, a federal economic sovereignty founded on unity, complementarity, and a long-term vision.